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Fox&Hounds discusses and explains the confluence of politics and business in California through our blog, featuring opinion pieces written by leaders from across the state published daily. Read below to see what's new on the site today.

For Education Poll, Knowledge Is Missing
By Joel Fox

Here's what is missing in the latest Public Policy Institute of California poll on education: a test of the respondents knowledge on education funding. It is an understandable reaction to respond to questions about improving schools by adding more funding. That is generally what PPIC got in its new k-12 education poll. But, the reaction measured in the poll is not graded against how much is actually spent on schools and what voters know about state spending priorities. Previous PPIC polls make this clear. While school funding takes the lion's share of state funding, PPIC has annually found that fewer than 1 in 5 voters know that to be true. The greater response is that prisons get the most money. If voters don't know how the state doles out money, what value is it to ask how much more should be spent by any government department? Of course, those receiving the school funds probably don't mind that voters are unaware of the state's funding priorities. If voters don't think schools are on top of the heap and they believe that schools deserve to be funded ahead of all other programs, then the voters are more likely to support funding and tax increases for schools.

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What If a Recession Hits California?
By John Seiler

As I predicted on Fox and Hounds just after the November election, there's a Trump Boom in California. But what if it stops? What if a recession slams us again? Two scenarios:
The Federal Reserve keeps increasing interest rates – much higher than now. Historically, that has brought a recession.
War breaks out with North Korea. No doubt America would win. But even if nutty dictator Kim Jong Un's missiles and nuclear bombs fizzle, the real threat comes from his massive, low-tech artillery on the border with South Korea. The Huffington Post just reported:
"Burrowed into hard granite mountain faces and protected behind blast doors, 15,000 North Korean cannons and rocket launchers are aimed at the glass skyscrapers, traffic-choked highways and blocks of apartment buildings 35 miles away in Seoul — and the U.S. military bases beyond.

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Caltrain Electrification is an Expensive Disaster
By Morris Brown

The Bay Area Commuter line, Caltrain, with a refusal by Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao to give her signature to its grant application, has been denied a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) $647 million full funding grant agreement (FFGA).
The FTA Grant was to partially fund a $2 billon project to electrify Caltrain's tracks with the objective to provide more passenger capacity and greater efficiency. The project has doubled in cost in the last 5 years, and the denial of the FTA grant has invoked invectives and disgust from

many in the Transportation community.
A recent editorial from the Sacramento Bee with the title “House Republicans launch a petty attack on a smart rail project” sums up the advocates position.
A response just obtained from a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of the FTA reveals deception has been promoted by Caltrain to gain approval of the grant.

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What We Hope to Hear from Mayor Garcetti
By Gary Toebben

This Thursday, Mayor Eric Garcetti will give his fourth State of the City (SOTC) address, and his first since he was overwhelmingly re-elected in March to a five and half year second term. Los Angeles has a lot to be proud of since the Mayor’s last SOTC. The results of the November and March elections were a clear statement by the electorate on their priorities. We look forward to hearing the Mayor lay out his next steps on these issues:
On homelessness – Last November, voters made an unprecedented commitment to tackling our homeless crisis by approving Measure HHH, a $1.2 billion bond to build 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing. In March, Mayor Garcetti helped champion the County Supervisors’ proposal, Measure H, a ¼ cent sales tax to fund housing and support services for homeless individuals throughout L.A. County. Now the City needs to move forward with designs and construction on the first dozen sites identified to house the homeless.

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Let Science Speak
By Aubrey Bettencourt

No matter the crisis, the State Water Resource Control Board (SWRCB), Governor Brown and the Democratic super-majority-controlled Legislature — despite their best efforts — are no match for nature itself as has been demonstrated during six years of drought and now three and a half months of flooding and massive infrastructure failures.
While species continue to evolve and adapt to survive, it seems our elected and appointed water policy makers and managers do not. Continuously throwing good water after bad for nearly thirty years in flawed programs has resulted in a record of failure: Threatened and endangered species dwindle and die, water quality continues to decline (especially in rural and impoverished communities) and ignored and aging infrastructure crumbles alarmingly.
Take for example the case of the unimpaired flows proposal by the SWRCB: The state would demand releasing water from key reservoirs in both wet and drought years and take 40–70 percent of the water flowing in the Stanislaus, Tuolumne and Merced Rivers. The new flow increases would be on top of nearly 30 percent already required to “aid” endangered Chinook salmon migration.

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